

Hank Severeid, Catcher Noted for His Durability

Henry L. (Hank) Severeid, 77, the most durable catcher in the history of baseball, died of a heart attack at his home in San Antonio, Tex., December 17.

From 1909 through 1937, Severeid caught in a record total of 2,357 major and minor league games. He also played other positions and appeared as a pinch-hitter in 246 games to bring his entire career total to 2,603.

In addition, he caught in eight World Series games.

A sturdy constitution inherited from Norwegian-born parents enabled Severeid to defy the occupational hazards of a catcher. He was six feet tall, weighed 195 pounds and had the strength to swing a 48-ounce bat, one of the heaviest used by major league players.

Born at Story City, Ia., Hank had eight brothers and one sister. All of Lars Severeid's sons played baseball, four of them professionally. Charley, Oscar and Elmer had varied minor league careers. Only Hank reached the majors.

Like other Scandinavian boys of his age, Hank lived an outdoor life, hunting, trapping and fishing. Following trap lines that extended 25 miles helped develop the strong legs so essential for a catcher. He also was a fine wrestler, who could throw opponents a head taller than himself.

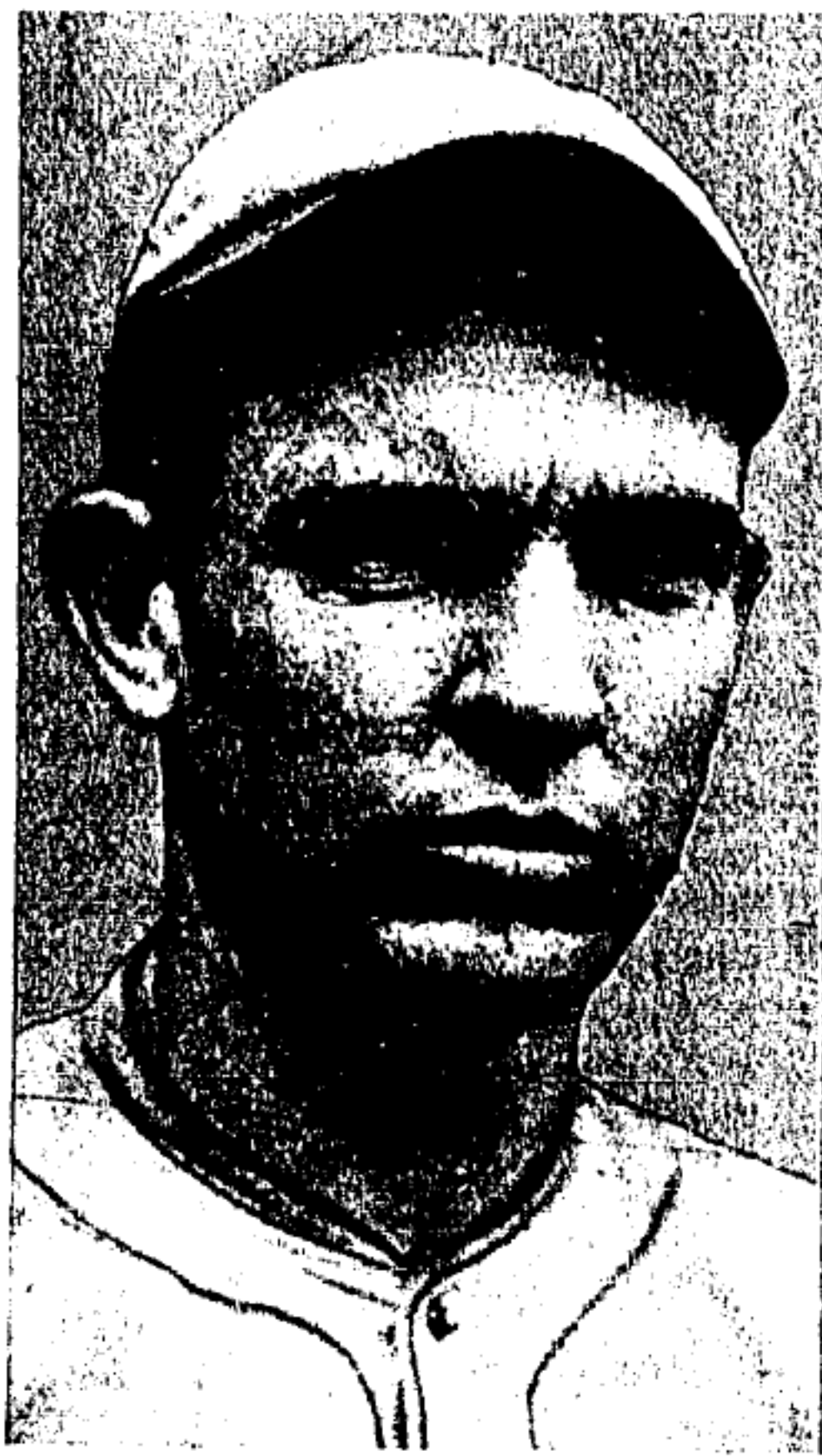
Made Bow at 18

Severeid was 18 years old when he signed his first contract with Burlington (Central Association) in 1909. In 25 games as a rookie, he hit .302, the first of a long series of .300 seasons during his career.

The Burlington franchise shifted to Ottumwa and Hank had an even better year in 1910, hitting .304 in 105 games. The Reds bought him for a reported price of \$2,000 and he broke into the major leagues under Manager Clark Griffith, later the owner of the Senators, in 1911. Although the Reds had a pair of veteran catchers, Griffith worked Severeid into 22 games and the youngster, making the jump from Class D, matched his Ottumwa average, .304.

Under Manager Hank O'Day in 1912, Hank appeared in 50 games, catching 20, but his plate mark dropped to .237. After eight more games with the Reds in 1913, he was released to Louisville (American Association), where he put the final polish on his talents.

After Severeid batted .317 for Louisville in 1914, the Browns



Hank Severeid

made a deal for him and, in a St. Louis uniform, he became one of the American League's outstanding catchers. He remained with the Browns until June, 1925, and caught over 100 games in each of eight different seasons. Twice he went as high as 143 games.

On May 5-6, 1917, Severeid was behind the bat for the no-hitters pitched by Bob Groom and Ernie Koob of the Browns against the White Sox.

From 1921 through 1924, Severeid compiled successive batting averages of .324, .321, .308 and .308. At the same time, he was a superior catcher defensively.

Picked Cobb Off Third

In 1921, in games in St. Louis, he threw out 51 of 53 base-runners who tried to steal on him. One day in Detroit, Ty Cobb challenged Severeid, warning the Browns' catcher, "Look out, I'm going to steal five bases on you today." Cobb failed to make good his boast completely. He stole three bases, but Severeid threw him out twice and picked him off third base on another occasion. Cobb later said it was the first time he had been caught off third in his entire career.

Severeid set an A. L. record, since broken, for fielding average for catchers, .993, in 1923. He made only three errors, two of them coming, oddly enough, on one play when he failed to touch the plate on a throw home and then pegged wildly to first base.

As a veteran catcher in 1925, Hank was batting .358 in 34 games with the Browns when he was traded to the Senators. Owner Clark Griffith, Severeid's first major league manager, wanted backstop help for Muddy Ruel to strengthen the Senators' bid for the pennant, and Hank filled the bill. He played in 46 games for the Nats and batted .364. However, Ruel still was Manager Bucky Harris' No. 1 catcher and Severeid took part in only one game in the World Series against the Pirates.

The next year the Yankees needed catching help and picked up Severeid on waivers from the Senators late in July. Again, Severeid helped win a pennant, batting .266, and this time he caught all seven games for the Yankees against the Cardinals in the 1926 World Series.

.289 Hitter in Majors

The World Series climaxed Severeid's major league career. When he was released to Sacramento (Pacific Coast) in January, 1927, he left with a higher batting average than any other A. L. catcher of his time, .289. Wally Schang was closest with .285.

Severeid always felt that he was sent down too soon—and his work in the PCL bore out his belief. He played with Sacramento in 1927, '28 and '29, then was with Hollywood in 1930 and '31. For the five seasons, his successive averages were .326, .301, .359, .367 and .347.

The Browns brought Severeid back to their organization as a minor league manager in the Texas League in 1932. He finally put aside his mask and mitt at Galveston in 1937 when, at the age of 46, he caught in both games of a double-header on the final day of the season.

After serving briefly as a coach for the Reds at Syracuse (International) in 1938, Severeid was assigned to the Cincinnati farm system as a field man and held the job through 1940. He returned to

baseball as a scout for the Cubs in 1943 and then joined the Red Sox as a scout in an association that lasted until his death.

In 1958, the St. Louis chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association picked Severeid as a catcher on an all-time team of Browns' and Cardinals' stars.

Bennie Bengough

Bernard (Bennie) Bengough, whose career in baseball spanned 50 years, died of a heart attack December 22 in Philadelphia. He was 70.

The good-natured, fun-loving Bengough had spent the last 22 years of his career with the Phillies, serving as a coach from 1946 until 1958 and as a member of the front-office staff from 1958 until the time of his death.

Bengough was a catcher with the Yankees during the roaring 20s, joining them in 1923 and leaving them after the 1930 campaign. He caught for the Browns in 1931 and 1932 and then, after a year in the minors, turned to managing in the minors. He also coached at Washington from 1940 through 1943.

"If nothing else," Bengough once said, "I had the most mispronounced name in baseball. Almost everybody called me 'Bongow.' Jake Ruppert (owner of the Yankees) called me 'Benkopf.' But the way my name was really pronounced was 'Bengoff.'"

Bennie's Weight Soared

At the height of his career, Bengough looked more like the baby than he did a catcher. He stood only 5 feet 7½ inches and weighed 145 pounds. In later years, when he joined the banquet circuit, he soared to about 200, taking on the appearance of a kewpie, bald head and all.

Bengough played or coached for so many managers he had trouble recalling their names sometimes.

"But one I'll never forget," he said, "was Miller Huggins. He was the greatest of all time and had some of the toughest guys in the world to manage."

Bengough played for Huggins when he was with the Yankees, a team that had, among others, Babe Ruth.

Bengough and the Babe were close friends and frequently drank beer together. "No one could guzzle beer like the Babe," Bennie once said. "But he always managed to play the next day."

"A lot of guys, like the Babe sometimes, would try to put things over on Hug. But Hug knew everything that was going on and the players didn't fool him one bit. Some people used to say Hug was too strict, but he wasn't at all."

Bengough broke into baseball almost by accident. While a student at Niagara U., he did some bullpen catching for Buffalo in 1917.

Mom Called Office

His mother, feeling her pride and joy wasn't getting enough duty, called the Buffalo management and suggested that Bennie get more action. The front office complied, letting Bennie catch an exhibition with the Browns. Bengough threw out Burt Shotton, a fast man, three times during the contest, and was rewarded with a \$150 a month contract by the Bisons. That launched his career.

"But I was really better off in the bullpen," he sighed during a bull session a few years ago. "In the bullpen, I got paid every day, but as a regular things weren't so good. The club went broke and I didn't collect my regular pay until a new ownership took over the following year."

Bengough, who suffered a heart attack in 1959, was in great demand as a speaker in the Phillies' fan area. "The only trouble with the job is that I get tired of eating turkey," he said. "Things get a lot better when I get to Penn-



Bennie Bengough

sylvania Dutch country. Boy, the cooking is great there!"

Bennie was asked once to what he attributed his success as a speaker.

"Mainly," he quipped, "it's lies. I tell them all kinds of lies about baseball, not lies about factual things, but about make-believe situations."

Just how far Bengough would have gone as a Big-Time catcher—he caught only 417 games including two World Series—if he had not suffered an arm injury, is plain conjecture. In 1926, pitcher George Uhle of the Indians struck Bengough on the arm and from then on the little backstop had trouble with his flipper.

Bengough, who is survived by his wife and two sons, once had given serious thought to becoming a Catholic priest. Ten of his classmates at Niagara became men of the cloth.

And when Bennie suffered his fatal heart attack, it was just after leaving Sunday Mass.

Elmore R. Harris

Elmore R. Harris, 46, who came out of obscurity at Morgan State to win six NCAA and AAU championship track events from 1944 to '46, died of a heart attack at his home in St. Albans, N. Y., December 8.

In NCAA competition, Harris won the 440-yard dash and 220-yard low hurdles in 1944. He was the AAU champion in the same two events in '44, won the 220-yard dash in 1945 and the 440-yard dash in 1946.

Harris gave up his amateur track status to play one year of pro football with the Brooklyn Dodgers of the former All-America Football Conference in 1947.

John (Jack) Murphy, close personal friend of Connie Mack and onetime scout for the late owner of the former Philadelphia Athletics, died at his home in Dunmore, Pa., recently.

Uhlaender Named Grad Of Year Off Sandlots

WICHITA, Kan.—Ted Uhlaender, Twins' outfielder and one of the leading American League hitters during the 1968 season, has been named the "Graduate of the Year" by the National Baseball Congress.

He was recipient of the annual award among the more than 200 players from the annual national tournament at Wichita who have advanced to the major leagues.

Uhlaender played in the 1960 national tournament with the Wichita (Kan.) Cessna Bobcats.

HOBBY CORNER

200,000 Sport Publications For Sale

Sport List #36 lists thousands of sport publications, 1860 to date — Spalding-Reach-Sporting News Guides, magazines, photos, football-baseball-basketball-hockey guides, etc. Sport Card List #86 includes baseball cards, 1888 to date, 1400 postcard photos, 1920-66 etc. Send 25c in coin for each list desired.

JAMES T. ELDER

Rt. 1, Box 285-A Odessa, Fla. 33556

TOPPS 1969 HOCKEY

132 cards — \$3.75 set
Series 2 — 1969 Hockey (issued in Canada)
88 cards — \$2.95 set
1968 TOPPS FOOTBALL
Series 1 — \$3.95 (132 cards)
Series 2 — 2.95 (88 cards)
Complete set — \$5.95

We pay postage
1968 Baseball — each series — \$2.25
Send 10c for big illustrated price list.

CARD COLLECTORS' CO.
Box 293 — Dept. SN
Franklin Square, N. Y. 11010

Diz and McLain Will Be Hailed By Chi Writers

CHICAGO, Ill.—"The Year of the Pitcher" will provide the theme for the Chicago baseball writers' 29th annual diamond dinner here January 12.

No fewer than seven pitchers have been selected to share six of the chapter's annual awards. This list is headed by the game's last two 30-game winners: Dizzy Dean, 30-7 in 1934, and Dennis McLain, 31-6 in 1968.

Dean, presently wintering in Scottsdale, Ariz., will receive the J. Louis Comiskey Memorial award for long and meritorious service. McLain, a native of Chicago, will be presented with the Will Hartridge award for the achievement of the year.

McLain's 31 victories climaxed a season when a total of 339 shut-outs were pitched in the majors (185 in the National compared with 154 in the American).

Other Chicago awards to pitchers will be presented in this manner: Mickey Lolich, Tigers—World Series hero.

Dick Ellsworth, Red Sox—William Wrigley, Jr., Memorial award for the comeback of the year. (Ellsworth was 16-7 for the Red Sox after a 6-7 mark for the Phillies in 1967.)

Wood Set Four Marks

Wilbur Wood, White Sox—Ken Hubbs Memorial award for setting four major league records en route to a 1.87 ERA in 88 appearances—86 in relief.

Gaylord Perry, Giants, and Ray Washburn, Cardinals, will share the Headline award for record back-to-back no-hitters in San Francisco last September 17-18.

Second baseman Glenn Beckert of the Cubs will be honored as the Chicago player of the year. Billy Williams, also of the Cubs, will be saluted as Chicago's all-time iron-man player. Williams has played in 819 consecutive games. Billy also led the league with 321 total bases.

A banquet bonus will be the Fred Hutchinson Foundation award presentation to Pete Rose of the Reds and the N. L.'s leading hitter with a .335 average. Dr. William B. Hutchinson, Fred's brother who lives in Seattle, Wash., will present the Foundation's \$1,000 scholarship award to Tommie Lee Munzel, a student in the University of Cincinnati's medical school.

James E. Wright of Chicago's American is the dinner committee chairman.